THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

ART WORKS FOR AMERICA

Strategic Plan, FY 2012-2016

October 2010

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Vision

A Nation in which the arts enrich the lives of all Americans
and enhance the livability of communities.

Mission

To advance artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation
for the benefit of individuals and communities.

Goals

1) The creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence.

2) To engage the public with diverse and excellent art.

3) To promote public knowledge and understanding about the contributions of the arts.

4) To enable the NEA mission through organizational excellence.

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Section One: Overview

The National Endowment for the Arts is the primary Federal agency charged with promoting the arts and arts education for the American people. Established in 1965, the NEA supports artistic talent and creativity in the United States and provides Americans with rich and diverse opportunities to experience art.

The Arts Endowment fulfills its legislative mandate primarily through the award of grants and cooperative agreements to nonprofit organizations. In addition, the NEA awards fellowships to creative writers and translators, and lifetime achievement awards as authorized. The Agency also exercises leadership through targeted support of key initiatives, research and evaluation projects, publications and convenings, and domestic and international partnerships.

The NEA's award decisions rely on competitive, merit-based reviews of proposals in the following areas: Artist Communities, Arts Education, Dance, Design, Folk & Traditional Arts, Literature, Local Arts Agencies, Media Arts, Museums, Music, Musical Theater, Opera, Presenting, Theater, and Visual Arts. Independent panels of citizen-expert reviewers and lay people, coupled with the Presidentially-appointed National Council on the Arts, affirm the artistic excellence of NEA-funded projects.

Most NEA awards require matching funds from non-Federal sources. This fact underscores the importance of partnerships to all NEA programs, projects, and activities. Partnership agreements define the Agency's relationship with State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations. Under current law, 40 percent of program funds appropriated to the NEA are made available to these entities (*see "State and Regional Partnerships," p. 9*).

At present, the NEA awards more than 2,500 grants and cooperative agreements exceeding $130 million, funding the arts in all 50 States and six U.S. jurisdictions, including urban

WHY "ART WORKS"?

The NEA's guiding principle, which informs the work of the Agency as reflected in this Strategic Plan, is embodied in two short words: *"Art works."*

As NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman has explained, the phrase has a triple meaning:

"Art works" is a noun. They are the books, crafts, dances, designs, drawings, films, installations, music, musicals, paintings, plays, performances, poetry, textiles, and sculptures that are the creation of artists.

"Art works" is a verb. Art works on and within people to change and inspire them; it addresses the need people have to create, to imagine, to aspire to something more.

"Art works" is a declarative sentence. Arts jobs are real jobs that are part of the real economy. Art workers pay taxes, and art contributes to economic growth, neighborhood revitalization, and the livability of American towns and cities.

and rural areas, and reaching civilian and military populations. By this measure, the NEA is the largest national funder of nonprofit arts in the U.S.

A strategic plan gives the NEA an opportunity to reflect on nearly half a century's experience in arts grant-making and support, and to revisit its goals and strategies in light of new social, economic, and demographic realities. It also allows the Agency to set clear guideposts for how it is accountable to the American people and for sharing findings, where appropriate, with the public primarily through the NEA website.

Vision

This document, the result of extensive consultation with public and internal stakeholders, charts the NEA's course for the next five years—bringing the Agency up-to-date with trends and issues governing arts participation at the start of a new decade.

The very qualities of foresight, leadership, and responsiveness to change are evident in the NEA's founding legislation, which describes the visionary role the arts can play in our national life and public discourse. "The arts…belong to all the people of the United States," the law declares in a bold series of statements outlining the Agency's purpose. They include:

- "The encouragement and support of national progress and scholarship in…the arts, while primarily a matter for private and local initiative, are also appropriate matters of concern for the Federal Government."

- "An advanced civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone, but must give full value and support to the other branches of scholarly and cultural activity in order to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future."

- "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens. It must therefore foster and support a form of education, and access to the arts…designed to make people of all backgrounds and wherever located masters of their technology and not its unthinking servants."

- "The world leadership which has come to the United States cannot rest solely upon superior power, wealth, and technology, but must be solidly founded upon worldwide respect and admiration for the Nation's high qualities as a leader in the realm of ideas and of the spirit."

- —To fulfill its educational mission, achieve an orderly continuation of free society, and provide models of excellence to the American people, the Federal Government must transmit the achievement and values of civilization from the past via the present to the future, and make widely available the greatest achievements of art.‖

In service of these ideas, the Arts Endowment envisions the arts as a vital component of everyday life—allowing Americans to dream of fresh possibilities and to expand their horizons as thinkers and citizens in a world of complex ideas and technologies. This access to imagination and artistic creativity is an inherent good; it can improve the quality of life for individuals and communities. The NEA's vision statement acknowledges this dual benefit.

Vision*: *A Nation in which the arts enrich the lives of all Americans and enhance the livability of communities.

Whether affording personal pleasure, insights, and inspiration, or contributing to our social, civic, and economic well-being, art works for America and its citizens. This work is embodied by the products and services that artists and arts organizations create. But it also refers to the empowerment of people and places through engagement with works of artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation.

Section Two: Mission, Goals, and Framework

Mission*: *To advance artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities.

The NEA mission is shaped by knowledge of the arts' transformative power in the lives of individuals and communities. The Agency aims not only to support works of high artistic merit, but also to propagate values of creativity and innovation through new areas of emphasis, such as original art-making and lifelong learning in the arts.

To fulfill its mission in FY 2012-2016, the Agency has established four goals. Brief descriptions of the goals are provided below, along with information about the principal strategy the NEA will use to achieve each goal, and a summary of external factors that will pose challenges to the Agency's work in these areas. The goals, like the NEA Strategic Plan itself, apply to all of the Arts Endowment's activities, including its direct programs and sub-grants awarded through NEA grants to the State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations.[1]

Goal 1*: *The Creation of Art that Meets the Highest Standards of Excellence

Rationale: American artists enrich the cultural, civic, and economic life of our Nation by producing original works in such fields as music and dance; drama and literature; architecture and design; and visual, media, and craft arts. By awarding organizational grants in the category of art-making, and grants to individuals where permitted, the NEA will harness the ingenuity of American artists and become a leader in creativity and innovation. Through the production of art in particular, the Agency contributes to a dynamic portfolio that can be enjoyed by present and future generations.

The NEA conducts an independent review of all grant proposals based on strict standards of artistic excellence and merit. Consequently, the artworks that result from these projects will replenish and rejuvenate America's enduring cultural legacy.

With this goal, the Arts Endowment is amplifying a core component of its legislative mandate, –to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent.‖

[1] As part of the NEA's performance and accountability reporting, sub-grant data from State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations, along with data from the Agency's direct grants, will be used to demonstrate the success of this Strategic Plan.

Principal Strategy: Fund grants to organizations, and to individuals where permitted, to support the creation of artwork across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.

External Factors: The creation of artwork will be given increased focus in the NEA's grant-making; previously, this has not been an area of singular focus, so it is difficult to estimate the volume or variety of proposals in this area that will require processing in FY 2012 and beyond.[2] Further, given the rise of new technologies and methods for art-making, as well as the rapidly blurring lines between many art forms and/or genres, the NEA must ensure that panel members have both the necessary expertise and adequate information to determine which projects meet the highest standards of excellence.

Goal 2: To Engage the Public with Diverse and Excellent Art

Rationale: Artworks and audiences come together to create an experience that is unique, memorable, and life-affirming. Americans connect with art by attending music, dance, and theater performances; by touring architectural sites and art exhibits; by reading works of literature; and by enjoying artworks through electronic and digital media. The NEA will provide new opportunities for Americans to have a profound and meaningful arts experience.

Americans also participate in the arts through a variety of learning experiences. NEA research has identified arts education as the single best predictor of a person's arts participation patterns throughout life.[3] By helping to foster public appreciation and understanding of various art forms, genres, and artistic traditions, as well as opportunities to participate in the creation of art, the NEA will build public capacity for creativity and innovation, and for lifelong participation in the arts.

Art makes an impact on individual lives, but also on neighborhoods, towns, and cities. Artists, arts workers, and arts industries play a critical role in shaping the life of a community.[4] They can improve its aesthetic appeal and the civic pride of its residents. They can spur job creation, productivity, and economic growth. And they can provide spaces and opportunities for community members of different backgrounds to converge on a shared arts experience, one that summons their collective creativity and allows them to re-imagine their surroundings. In

[2] From 2009 to 2010, however, roughly 9-11 percent of all direct grants the NEA funded under existing application guidelines were for the primary purpose of creating art.

[3] For example, see NEA Research Report #36, *Effects of Arts Education on Participation in the Arts* (1996). A more up-to-date analysis of this relationship is forthcoming in an NEA research report authored by Nick Rabkin of the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center.

[4] Empirical data underlying this assertion has been reported by, among others, Mark Stern and Susan Seifert of the University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP); see www.sp2.upenn.edu/SIAP/ . Other data have been presented by researchers Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, notably in a forthcoming NEA white paper on the arts and creative placemaking.

STATE AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The states and regions have been strong partners with the NEA in supporting the arts in America. Under current law, the NEA allocates 40 percent of its annually appropriated program funds to the 50 State Arts Agencies (SAAs), the six jurisdictions and territories, and the six nonprofit Regional Arts Organizations (RAOs). These partnerships greatly extend the NEA's reach and impact, translating national leadership into local benefit. They are critical to the NEA's ability to achieve its mission and ensure access to the arts for all Americans.

NEA funds are distributed to SAAs (including jurisdictions and territories) through a combination of competitive and non-competitive funding.

Every three years, SAAs are required to submit a formal partnership agreement to the NEA. The agreement must address such topics as planning, evaluation, communications, and strategies for promoting arts education and fostering arts in underserved communities. Each state plan reflects the priorities of the states' citizens, solicited by each SAA through public hearings.

The Nation's six Regional Arts Organizations allow SAAs to better leverage their State appropriations and NEA grant dollars, effectively transcending State boundaries with their funding activities. RAO partnership grants from the NEA, for example, help to support regional touring programs in the arts.

recognition of these benefits, the NEA will support grants that integrate the arts with strategies to improve the livability of communities.

Principal Strategy: Fund grants to organizations to provide the following services across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic areas: engage the public with works of artistic excellence; provide Americans of all ages with opportunities for lifelong learning in the arts; and strengthen communities through the arts.

External Factors: NEA research has shown a decline in levels of public participation in certain "benchmark" types of live arts events (e.g., classical music, jazz, theater, ballet, and opera). Concurrently, young Americans report less exposure to arts education than measured by prior NEA surveys.[5]

On the other hand, arts events at schools and religious institutions are drawing large numbers of unique audience members, as are outdoor fairs and festivals. Similarly, other informal activities, including personal performance of artwork and online arts experiences, provide for more customized arts experiences and opportunities to combine art with social networking. Through these activities, Americans find a greater degree of interactivity than they often find in traditional arts venues.

The ability to engage people successfully with art is beset by a number of

[5] For information about declines in the national rates of arts participation and arts learning from 2002 to 2008, see NEA Research Report #49, *2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* (2009).

complicating variables, not least of which is: what does success look like? (To help address this question, the NEA will conduct post-award reviews of a subset of grants to determine if they employed innovative methods to engage audiences. The Agency also will conduct audience surveys to learn how art-goers respond to the NEA-supported artworks being performed and displayed.)

Similarly, the ability to strengthen communities through the arts can depend on a variety of social, economic, and demographic factors unique to each location. To meet these challenges, the NEA will revise final report forms for grantees seeking to strengthen communities. The new data collection forms will require quantitative and qualitative reporting of the steps taken to improve livability. The additional data will include information on the types of partnerships that were fostered within communities. A robust evaluation of the impacts achieved by these types of grants, however, will require longer-term studies.

***Goal 3*: To Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Contributions of the Arts**

Rationale: As Federal, State, and local policymakers assess the place of arts and culture in their programs and budgets, they seek authoritative details about the arts' contributions to social, economic, and civic outcomes. The NEA remains the primary national source for data and analyses about the U.S. arts sector. Increasingly, the Agency has aimed not only to explore the factors and conditions affecting arts participation and art-making, but also to document the impact of the arts on American lives and communities.

More sophisticated and credible information about the value and impact of the arts will enable the NEA, in turn, to pursue its overall mission more effectively. Some of that knowledge will bear directly on the Agency's work in supporting arts creation, arts participation, lifelong learning in the arts, and arts integration with community life. Other research findings will influence national and community-level indicators of creative and cultural vitality, allowing policy-makers to become better informed about the distinctive contributions the arts make to society. The NEA's Office of Research & Analysis will take a leadership role in convening dialogues and information-sharing about arts and culture.

In particular, the Arts Endowment will communicate knowledge—about the value and impact of the arts—to other Federal agencies and departments to complement their efforts to serve the American people. Internationally, the NEA will raise awareness among other countries and cultures about the exemplary offerings of American artists; conversely, the Agency will provide opportunities for Americans to expand their knowledge and understanding about the arts and culture of other nations. Such efforts—whether across government or across national boundaries—can significantly extend the reach and impact of the arts.

Principal Strategy: Create a Research Agenda outlining short- and medium-term (3-5 years) plans and priorities for the NEA Office of Research & Analysis, and vet with internal and external stakeholders; identify strategic Federal and international partners and cultivate relationships with those entities.

External Factors: As with much social impact research, studies of arts participation and arts education continue to show correlative, but not conclusively causal, linkages between those activities and outcomes in other areas. Also, economic impact studies have struggled to isolate the impact of arts and culture from other local factors. Impact analyses in the arts will require creative research methods; more robust data collection involving Federal, academic, and commercial partners; regular convenings with the Nation's cultural research experts; and smarter metrics.

Goal 4: To Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence

Rationale: Success in meeting this goal is a prerequisite for the NEA's success in serving its overall mission. The Arts Endowment must ensure that it is a high-performing and publicly accountable organization committed to 1) supporting arts creation and innovation; 2) engaging Americans with diverse and excellent art; and 3) promoting knowledge and understanding about the contributions of the arts. To succeed in these aims, the NEA must possess a productive, creative, and motivated workforce; ensure that its operations are transparent to the public; and be a vigilant steward of public funds and resources.

Principal Strategy: Design and allocate positions appropriately; hire the right people; give them the resources to succeed including relevant training; and reward employees based on performance. All other management strategies and accomplishments flow from this principal human resource strategy.

External Factors: People make decisions about where to work based on several criteria, among them organization mission, working environment, salary, and benefits. As with all Federal agencies, the NEA cannot control all these factors, so it must use the full range of government hiring and compensation flexibilities currently available to find, hire, and retain the best people.

The National Endowment for the Arts' Strategic Plan Framework for FY2012-2016

Strategic Goals, Outcomes, and Performance Measures

VISION STATEMENT

A Nation in which the arts enrich the lives of all Americans and enhance the livability of communities

MISSION STATEMENT

To advance artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities

GOAL 1: The Creation of Art that Meets the Highest Standards of Excellence

Outcome 1.1

The Portfolio of American Art is Expanded

GOAL 2: To Engage the Public with Diverse and Excellent Art

Outcome 2.1

Americans Throughout the Nation Experience Art

Outcome 2.2

Americans of All Ages Acquire Knowledge or Skills in the Arts

Outcome 2.3

American Communities are Strengthened Through the Arts

GOAL 3: To Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Contributions of the Arts

Outcome 3.1

Evidence of the Value and Impact of the Arts is Expanded and Promoted

Outcome 3.2

Partnerships Increase the Domestic and International Impact of the Arts

GOAL 4: To Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence

Outcome 4.1

NEA Attracts, Maintains, and Optimizes a Productive, Creative, and Motivated Workforce

Outcome 4.2

NEA is an Efficient and Vigilant Steward of Public Funds

Note. The NEA Strategic Plan Framework applies to all Agency activities, including its direct grant programs and sub-grants awarded through its grants to State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations.

Section Three: Outcomes

***Goal 1*: The Creation of Art that Meets the Highest Standards of Excellence**

***Outcome 1.1*: The Portfolio of American Art is Expanded**

Throughout its history, America has exemplified ingenuity and inventiveness in such diverse fields as basic science, engineering, agriculture, medicine, commerce, and information technology. But our Nation's advances in artistic excellence and innovation have been no less profound or transformative. American artworks are recognized and celebrated worldwide. American artists have made indelible contributions ranging from original plays and literature to music and dance compositions – from paintings, sculpture, and craft arts to films, video, and photography and from architecture to graphic, industrial, and computer design.

Since its establishment in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts has fostered artistic creativity through its basic grant-making. The NEA's founding legislation is explicit about this role, stating: "It is necessary and appropriate for the Federal Government to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry, but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent."

As with all of its grant-making, the NEA vouchsafes the artistic excellence of projects to support the creation of new art by maintaining a rigorous peer review system. Grant proposals are vetted by panels of citizen-experts, including nationally recognized artists, as well as lay people who are knowledgeable about the arts but who are not engaged in the arts as a profession. These panels are organized around the core arts disciplines supported by the Agency: Artist Communities, Arts Education, Dance, Design, Folk & Traditional Arts, Literature, Local Arts Agencies, Media Arts, Museums, Music, Musical Theater, Opera, Presenting, Theater, and Visual Arts. Another panel reviews grant applications submitted by State Arts Agencies and by Regional Arts Organizations. NEA panelists are also chosen to reflect diversity with respect to artistic expression, race and ethnicity, geography, and gender.

A NOTE ON INNOVATION

In FY 2012, the NEA will pilot new review criteria for all consortium grant proposals to include a new focus on innovation. Such projects must demonstrate the following characteristics:

- They are likely to prove *transformative* with the potential for meaningful change, whether in the development or enhancement of new or existing art forms, new approaches to the creation or presentation of art, or new ways of engaging the public with art;
- They are distinctive, offering *fresh insights and new value* for their fields and/or the public through unconventional solutions; and
- They have the *potential to be shared and/or emulated*, or are likely to lead to other innovations.

Their recommendations are united by a consideration of each grant proposal's quality, its potential impact, and the applicant's ability to execute the project. Panel ratings and recommendations are duly forwarded to the National Council on the Arts, a standing advisory body of renowned artists, scholars, and arts patrons appointed by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. The Council convenes several times a year to review individual panel findings and vote on which proposals should be recommended for funding. The NEA Chairman then makes the final decision on all grant awards.

To be approved for NEA funding, therefore, grant proposals must demonstrate adherence to the strictest standards of artistic excellence and merit. The original artworks resulting from NEA-supported projects can be understood to replenish and rejuvenate America's enduring cultural legacy. The funding of commissions and design competitions, and workshops and residencies—all are key strategies for the cultivation of original artworks.

The Agency also recognizes that conditions for arts creation are vastly different from those in 1965. Hybrid art forms have emerged; immigrant artists have blazed new idioms of expression; the popular distinction between "highbrow" and "lowbrow" genres has eroded; and the advent of new technologies has altered the very processes by which art-making can occur, with implications for who now can participate.

Against this backdrop, the public appetite for many forms of arts-making is as healthy as ever. Recent data from the NEA's Survey of Public Participation in the Arts show that young adults are highly engaged in creating artworks of their own, notably through electronic media and the Internet.[6] In many art forms, moreover, arts creation is equally prevalent among urban and rural communities, and among Americans of diverse socioeconomic characteristics.

Confronted with these external demands, resource-constrained arts organizations are often tasked to explore models of creativity that are not only sustainable, but which add distinctive value to their artistic fields. The Agency intends to provide fresh

[6] NEA Research Report #51, *Audience 2.0: How Technology Influences Arts Participation* (2010).

leadership in this regard to ensure that the most innovative ideas and formats for artistic expression find support at the NEA. Through a pilot with all NEA consortium grant proposals—those involving multiple partners as a single applicant—the Agency will apply Innovation as a standard criterion for their review (*see "A Note on Innovation," p. 14*). Additionally, through an independent post-award review process, the Agency will collect information about innovative forms of art-making, in addition to artistic excellence, to help drive its future programmatic decisions.

Strategies

1) Fund grants to organizations and, where permitted, to individuals, to support the creation of artworks across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.

2) Below is a list of representative project activities that could be supported by these grants. Not all of the activities are confined to this strategic outcome. The examples include:

    - Commissioning, development, and production of new work
    - Design competitions and design or planning projects for new arts or cultural spaces or landscapes
    - Artist workshops or residencies where the primary purpose is to create new art
    - Opportunities for writers and translators to create or to refine their work
    - Media arts productions

3) Enhance geographic data collection and reporting capabilities to ensure that grants for the purpose of creating art are being funded across the United States.

4) Continue to develop and support leadership initiatives that provide opportunities for the Arts Endowment to address special artistic or cultural needs—whether field- or geography-based.

5) Ensure that NEA panel review members have the qualifications and expertise necessary to identify projects that can expand the portfolio of American art meeting the highest standards of excellence.

6) Maintain a fair and effective panel review process that provides panel members with adequate information to determine which projects meet the highest standards of excellence, and instills public confidence in the Agency's decision-making process.

7) Require that consortium grant proposals for projects seeking to create art be focused on innovation (*see "A Note on Innovation," p. 14*).[7]

8) Work efficiently and effectively with the State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations to explore strategies that can help the Agency fulfill this outcome.

Performance Measures

The NEA has developed the following performance measures to track success in achieving this outcome.[8]

Measure	***Scope***	***Source***	***Frequency***
1.1.1: Post-Award Review, by Independent Experts, of Artistic Excellence in NEA Grants Awarded Primarily for the Purpose of Creating Art	Gauges whether artistic excellence has been achieved through NEA grant awards made primarily for the purpose of creating art.	An assessment by independent experts of a random sample of Outcome 1.1 grant awards after the grants are closed-out.	Outcome 1.1 grant awards from each artistic discipline will be assessed once every three to five years.
1.1.2: Percent of Grants Awarded Primarily for the Purpose of Creating Art that Employ Innovative Forms of Art-Making	Conveys the percent of NEA grant awards made primarily for the purpose of creating art that employs innovative forms of art-making. This measure would apply only to Consortium grant awards under this outcome.	The total pool of Outcome 1.1 grant awards.	Annually
1.1.3: Post-Award Review, by Independent Experts, of Innovation in NEA Grants Awarded Primarily for the Purpose of Creating Art	Gauges whether innovation has been achieved through NEA grant awards made primarily for the purpose of creating art. This measure would only apply to Consortium grant awards under this outcome.	An assessment by independent experts of a random sample of Outcome 1.1 Consortum grant awards after the grants are closed-out.	Once every three to five years

[7] Consortium grants have the advantage of allowing multiple partners to apply for a single grant—even if they already have applied individually for grant support for other projects. By pursuing this strategy, the NEA will afford such organizations another chance to apply for Agency funds, potentially to support their most innovative work.

[8] Throughout this Strategic Plan, the Agency is relying on a limited number of strategic measures, only those most instrumental to gauging performance in each outcome area. Consequently, not all of the NEA's activities in support of this outcome are reflected in the metrics shown.

Goal 2: To Engage the Public with Diverse and Excellent Art

Outcome 2.1: Americans throughout the Nation Experience Art

Artworks and audiences come together to create an experience that is unique, memorable, and life-affirming. Arts experiences open new vistas of possibility, they challenge our aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual constructs, and they enlarge our understanding of what it means to be human. Americans connect with art by attending music, dance, and theater performances; by touring architectural sites and art exhibits; and by reading works of literature. They participate through electronic media—TV and radio, certainly, but also through handheld devices and the Internet—whether sampling a video clip, curating a playlist, or downloading a blog entry about graphic art.

Arts events at schools and religious institutions, meanwhile, are drawing large numbers of unique audience members, as are outdoor fairs and festivals. These types of activities—including the personal performance of artwork—feature participants more demographically diverse than those at other, more "formal" kinds of arts events. Indeed, Americans pursue informal arts activities for many of the same reasons they explore art online: for a greater degree of interactivity than they often find in traditional arts venues, for a more customized arts experience, and for the opportunity to combine art with social networking.

Together, these activities denote a concept of arts participation that goes beyond passive spectatorship. The Nation's arts presenters and event programmers continue to grapple with this reality. In 2008, for example, live attendance rates for certain "benchmark" arts events—classical music, jazz, opera, ballet, theater, and visual art exhibits—fell or held flat compared with previous years. For most live arts performances, audiences have aged more rapidly than the general public, and they contain disproportionately fewer Americans of low incomes and education levels.[9]

NEA programming must be responsive to the changing landscape of the arts and arts participation. It is no longer enough to provide access to artistic works of high quality; the Agency will also reward innovative strategies and models for engaging the public directly with such experiences. Likewise, the Arts Endowment has a responsibility to help preserve America's great artistic traditions in all their diversity—but it also has a responsibility to bring that work into diverse populations so that it may stimulate new discoveries in people from multiple backgrounds. This emphasis on art "delivery" systems is entirely in keeping with a new generation of arts audiences who, faced with many competing leisure options, nevertheless appear to value personal participation over passivity.

[9] For information about declines in the national rates of arts participation and arts learning from 2002 to 2008, see NEA Research Report #49, *2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* (2009).

Strategies

1) Fund grants to provide engagement with artistic excellence across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.

2) Below is a list of representative project activities that could be supported by these grants. Not all of the activities are confined to this strategic outcome. The examples include:

    - Exhibits, performances, concerts, and readings;
    - Touring and outreach activities;
    - Restaging of repertory and master works of historical significance;
    - Art fairs and festivals;
    - Documentation, preservation, and conservation of artwork;
    - Public programs raising awareness of cultural heritage;
    - Film screenings;
    - Broadcasts or recordings through TV, radio, and the Internet;
    - Design charrettes;
    - Publication, production, and promotion of books, magazines, and catalogues; and
    - Services to artists and arts organizations.

3) Enhance geographic data collection and reporting capabilities to ensure that grants for the purpose of providing engagement with artistic excellence are being funded across the United States.

4) Continue to develop and support leadership initiatives that provide opportunities for the Arts Endowment to address special artistic or cultural needs—whether field- or geography-based.

5) Ensure that NEA panel review members have the qualifications and expertise necessary to identify projects that can engage the public with diverse and excellent art.

6) Maintain a fair and effective panel review process that provides panel members with adequate information to determine which projects meet the highest standards of excellence, and instills public confidence in the Agency's decision-making process.

7) Require that consortium grant proposals for projects seeking to engage the public with diverse and excellent art be focused on innovation (*see "A Note on Innovation," p. 14*).[10]

8) Work efficiently and effectively with the State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations to explore strategies that can help the Agency fulfill this outcome.

Performance Measures

The NEA has developed the following performance measures to track success in achieving this outcome.[11]

Measure	***Scope***	***Source***	***Frequency***
2.1.1: Percent of Adults Experiencing Art during the NEA's Most Recent General Population Survey Period	Estimates the level of U.S. public participation in arts activities.	An independent survey of a random sample of U.S. adults.	Biennially.
2.1.2: Percent of Adults who Report Being Affected by NEA-Funded Art Exhibits and Performances	Gauges audience response to projects supported by Outcome 2.1 grant awards presented to in-person audiences.	An independent audience survey conducted on a random sample of Outcome 2.1 grant awards to support art exhibits and performances.	Biennially.
2.1.3: Percent of Grants Awarded Primarily for the Purpose of Making Art Available that Employ Innovative Forms of Art Delivery	Conveys the percent of NEA grant awards made primarily for the purpose of making art available that employ innovative forms of art delivery. This measure would apply only to Consortium grant awards under this outcome.	The total pool of Outcome 2.1 grant awards.	Annually.
2.1.4: Post-Award Review, by Independent Experts, of Innovation in NEA Grants Awarded Primarily for the Purpose of Making Art Available	Gauges whether innovation has been achieved through NEA grant awards made primarily for the purpose of making art available. This measure would only apply to Consortium grant awards under this outcome.	An assessment by independent experts of a random sample of Outcome 2.1 grant awards made primarily for making art available.	Outcome 2.1 Consortium grant awards from each artistic discipline will be assessed once every three to five years.

[10] Consortium grants have the advantage of allowing multiple organizations to apply for a single grant—even if they already have applied individually for grant support for other projects. By pursuing this strategy, the NEA will afford such organizations another chance to apply for Agency funds, to support their most innovative work.

[11] Throughout this Strategic Plan, the Agency is relying on a limited number of strategic measures, only those most instrumental to gauging performance in each outcome area. Consequently, not all of the NEA's activities in support of this outcome are reflected in the metrics shown.

Goal 2: To Engage the Public with Diverse and Excellent Art

Outcome 2.2: Americans of All Ages Acquire Knowledge or Skills in the Arts

In a characteristically sweeping formulation, Walt Whitman once said: "To have great poets there must be great audiences too." Without debating the truth of this statement, it is possible to concede a fundamental reciprocity in the relationship between artists and audiences, as described in the previous section. The knowledge and observational skills that audiences bring to an arts experience can drastically affect the outcome, at least as much as the artist's level of training, commitment, and individual talent. In national studies, moreover, arts education consistently emerges as the single best predictor of arts participation throughout life, whether through live attendance or the personal performance or creation of art.

By helping to foster public appreciation and understanding of various art forms, genres, and artistic traditions, the NEA will build public capacity for lifelong participation in the arts. For audiences, the result will be a richer, more complex and meaningful arts experience. And for artists and/or teachers, the NEA will facilitate the transfer of critical knowledge and skills that will enable them to refine their ability and improve their work.

Beyond enriching the quality of personal arts experiences, arts education is a hallmark of civilization. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has observed, for example, "the important role that arts education plays in providing American students with a well-rounded education. The arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem-solvers who are confident and able to think creatively." Further, he noted, "these qualities can be especially important in improving learning among students from economically disadvantaged circumstances."[12]

Other factors highlight the NEA's continued leadership in arts education as necessary and appropriate. First, although Federal law has designated arts education a core academic subject to be taught in our Nation's public schools, States have struggled to keep it on the curriculum. Budget cuts to State education departments, State arts agencies, and school districts have contributed in many cases to a weakening of arts education at the local level. Secondly, State standards for evaluating teacher practices and assessing student learning in the arts differ widely—as do strategies for their implementation. All of these factors may have been at work when, in 2008, the U.S. Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found relatively low percentages of 8th-graders attending schools where visual arts and music instruction are offered several times a week.

In this environment, the NEA can be most effective in two ways: by upholding rigorous, standards-based arts education for K-12 students and teachers, in and out of school; and by providing Americans of all ages with more informal opportunities to learn in and about the arts. One track involves supporting school- and community-based projects that adhere to National or

[12] U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, letter of August 2009 to "School and Education Community Leaders".

State arts education standards and that include knowledge- and/or skills-based assessment of students and/or teachers. The other track is broader. It accommodates Americans still in school, those no longer in school, and those yet to begin school. These types of arts education grants might involve a seminar held as part of a theater performance, or a docent tour as part of a museum event. They might include a teaching artist at a day-care center or a writer's workshop at a nursing home. Although not aligned with National or State standards, these projects will have met NEA standards for artistic excellence and merit, as attested by rigorous peer review.

Generational shifts also justify the NEA's renewed focus on lifelong learning in the arts. For the past few decades, Baby Boomers and older age cohorts traditionally have accounted for most of the Nation's arts-goers. As these Americans head into retirement, there is every reason to expect their continued participation in the arts through classes, lessons, workshops, and online courses.

For children and youth, meanwhile, informal opportunities for arts learning will address a crucial gap that may or may not be filled by local school curricula. Even if arts education is not yet universal, today's employers are acutely aware of the capacity for risk-taking and creative thinking that the subject can bestow. Business leaders have identified such abilities as highly desirable for a 21st-century workforce, even as they acknowledge problems in finding creative workers among today's job applicants.[13] From this vantage point, arts education can not only improve the quality of Americans' arts experiences, it may well improve the quality of their lives and livelihoods.

Strategies

1) Fund grants to provide Americans of all ages with opportunities for arts education across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.

2) Below is a list of representative project activities that could be supported by these grants. Not all of the activities are confined to this strategic goal. The examples include:

    - Lectures, symposia, and community outreach;
    - Workshops and demonstrations;
    - Mentorships;
    - Professional development for artists, teaching artists, teachers, and other educators;
    - Lifelong learning activities for children, adults, and intergenerational groups;
    - Assessments and evaluations of arts learning;

[13] The Conference Board, *Ready to Innovate: Are Educators and Executives Aligned on the Creative Readiness of the U.S. Workforce?* (2008)

- Online courses or training;

- Production, publication, and distribution of teachers' guides; and

- Standards-based arts education activities for K-12 students.

3) Enhance geographic data collection and reporting capabilities to ensure that grants for the purpose of providing opportunities for Americans of all ages to acquire knowledge or skills in the arts are being funded across the United States.

4) Continue to develop and support leadership initiatives that provide opportunities for the Arts Endowment to address special artistic or cultural needs—whether field- or geography-based.

5) Ensure that NEA panel review members have the qualifications and expertise necessary to identify projects that can provide opportunities for Americans of all ages to acquire knowledge or skills in the arts.

6) Maintain a fair and effective panel review process that provides panel members with adequate information to determine which projects meet the highest standards of excellence, and instills public confidence in the Agency's decision-making process.

7) Require that consortium grant proposals for projects seeking to provide opportunities for Americans of all ages to acquire knowledge or skills in the arts be focused on innovation (*see "A Note on Innovation," p. 14*).[14]

8) Work efficiently and effectively with the State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations to explore strategies that can help the Agency fulfill this outcome.

9) Ensure complete coverage by our programs, by, among other efforts, supporting outreach efforts through our *Challenge America* grants and maintaining our commitment to award at least one direct grant in each Congressional district every year, a goal the Agency has achieved each year since FY 2005—now with a particular focus on arts education projects.

[14] Consortium grants have the advantage of allowing multiple organizations to apply for a single grant—even if they already have applied individually for grant support for other projects. By pursuing this strategy, the NEA will afford such organizations another chance to apply for Agency funds, to support their most innovative work.

Performance Measures

The NEA has developed the following performance measures to track success in achieving this outcome.[15]

Measure	*Scope*	*Source*	*Frequency*
2.2.1: Percent of Children/Youth and Teachers who Demonstrate Learning in Arts Education Standards-Based Projects	Gauges the extent to which NEA grant awards made for arts education standards-based projects demonstrate learning by children/youth and teachers.	Final reports completed by recipients of Outcome 2.2 grant awards for arts education standards-based projects.	Annually.
2.2.2: Percent of Adults Participating in at Least One Arts Learning Activity (e.g., class, lesson) during the NEA's Most Recent **General Population Survey Period**	Estimates the level of participation in a formal arts learning activity (e.g., class, lesson, seminar, arts conference, or other instruction) by the U.S. adult population.	An independent survey of a random sample of U.S. adults.	Biennially.

[15] Throughout this Strategic Plan, the Agency is relying on a limited number of strategic measures, only those most instrumental to gauging performance in each outcome area. Consequently, not all of the NEA's activities in support of this outcome are reflected in the metrics shown.

Goal 2: To Engage the Public with Diverse and Excellent Art

Outcome 2.3: American Communities Are Strengthened Through the Arts

Art makes an impact on individual lives, but also on neighborhoods, towns, and cities. Artists, arts workers, and arts industries play a dynamic role in shaping the life of a community. They can improve its aesthetic appeal and the civic pride of its residents. They can spur job creation, productivity, and economic growth. And they can provide spaces and opportunities for community members of different backgrounds to converge on a shared arts experience, one that summons their collective creativity and allows them to re-imagine their surroundings.

The types of arts projects that have the potential to strengthen communities are as diverse and distinctive as American communities themselves. Artists might collaborate with neighborhood residents to develop a cultural action plan or to produce a series of art murals or festivals. Architects and designers might assist municipal authorities in reviving a city streetscape. Or arts organizations might work with local businesses to transform a blighted district into a thriving hub of artist studios and residencies.

By funding such projects, the NEA will enable nonprofit organizations and their partners to enhance the livability of their communities. Measurement of public benefits that accrue from these grants will require long-range metrics, which ultimately may involve special studies considering factors such as in-and-out migration patterns and data from community member surveys.[16] But in the short term, the Agency expects grantees and their community partners to show incremental progress toward achieving greater livability.

THE ARTS AND LIVABILITY

Livability consists of a variety of factors that contribute to the quality of life in a community.

Education, employment, safety, sustainability, affordable housing, ease of transportation, access to public buildings and facilities, an aesthetically pleasing environment, and ample opportunities for social, civic, and cultural participation are among qualities that make a place livable.

Arts and design can enhance livability by providing new avenues for expression and creativity. Arts and design-related livability activities may include the development of plans for cultural and/or creative sector growth, the enhancement of public spaces through design or new artworks, arts or design activities that foster community interaction, or the engagement of artists, designers, and/or arts organizations in plans and processes to improve community livability and enhance the unique characteristics of a community.

[16] See discussion of the NEA Research Agenda in Section 5 and the proposed impact evaluation of the *Our Town* initiative in Section 7.

Some of that progress will be reflected in the number of communities nationwide that integrate the arts with new or ongoing livability efforts. Progress also will be characterized in terms of the variety of new partnerships resulting from these grants. In addition, grantees will be asked to demonstrate a specific set of outcomes related to each strategy they undertake.

Strategies

1) Fund grants to strengthen communities across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic areas, including programs that support communities nationwide with planning, design, and arts engagement projects.

2) Below is a list of representative project activities that can be supported by these grants. The grants would pursue one or more of the following sub-strategies:

    - *Develop Plan(s) for Cultural and/or Creative Sector Growth.* Includes activities such as planning for arts/cultural districts and creative industry hubs/districts/clusters, cultural asset mapping, and other cultural planning activities.

    - *Use Design to Enhance/Revitalize Public Space(s).* Includes design activities such as charrettes and competitions, development of design specifications, and other design activities.

    - *Commission and/or Install New Art to Improve Public Space(s).* Includes commissioning of permanent and/or temporary site-specific public art (e.g., murals and sculptures, sculpture gardens, and waterfront art).

    - *Plan and/or Conduct Arts Activities to Foster Interaction Among Community Members.* Includes arts activities (e.g., arts festivals, outdoor exhibitions, and performances) intended to engage community members in public spaces.

    - *Engage Artists and/or Arts Organizations.* Includes involvement of artists and the arts community in cultural planning, design, and community engagement activities.

    - *Other Strategies* to Improve Livability through Arts and Design.

3) Encourage—in grant application guidance and the panel review process—diverse and multiple partnerships as a tool for enhancing the effectiveness and impact of funded projects.

4) Enhance geographic data collection and reporting capabilities to ensure that grants for the purpose of strengthening communities through the arts are being funded across the United States.

5) Continue to develop and support leadership initiatives that provide opportunities for the Arts Endowment to address special artistic or cultural needs—whether field- or geography-based.

6) Ensure that NEA panel review members have the qualifications and expertise necessary to identify projects that can strengthen communities through the arts.

7) Maintain a fair and effective panel review process that provides panel members with adequate information to determine which projects meet the highest standards of excellence, and instills public confidence in the Agency's decision-making process.

8) Require that consortium grant proposals for projects seeking to strengthen communities through the arts be focused on innovation (*see "A Note on Innovation," p. 14*).[17]

9) Work efficiently and effectively with the State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations to explore mutual strategies that can help the Agency fulfill this outcome.

[17] Consortium grants have the advantage of allowing multiple organizations to apply for a single grant—even if they already have applied individually for grant support for other projects. By pursuing this strategy, the NEA will afford such organizations another chance to apply for Agency funds, to support their most innovative work.

Performance Measures

The NEA has developed the following performance measures to track success in achieving this outcome.[18]

Measure	*Scope*	*Source*	*Frequency*
2.3.1: Number of Communities that Enlist the Arts in Efforts to Improve Livability	Identifies, among Outcome 2.3 grant award recipients, the number of communities that enlisted the arts in efforts to improve livability.	Final reports completed by Outcome 2.3 grant award recipients.	Annually.
2.3.2: Types of Partners in Communities that Enlist the Arts in Efforts to Improve Livability	Identifies the types of partners Outcome 2.3 grant award recipients enlisted in efforts to improve community livability through the arts.	Final reports completed by Outcome 2.3 grant award recipients.	Annually.
2.3.3: Percent of Grants Awarded for Projects that Demonstrate Improved Livability in Specific Impact Areas	Identifies the percent of Outcome 2.3 grant award recipients that provide evidence of improved community livability.	Final reports completed by Outcome 2.3 grant award recipients.	Annually.

[18] Throughout this Strategic Plan, the Agency is relying on a limited number of strategic measures, only those most instrumental to gauging performance in each outcome area. Consequently, not all of the NEA's activities in support of this outcome are reflected in the metrics shown.

Goal 3: To Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Contributions of the Arts

Outcome 3.1: Evidence of the Value and Impact of the Arts is Expanded and Promoted

Both the arts sector and the broader public require statistically reliable data on the relationship of arts and culture to other aspects of everyday life. Arts workers and arts industries depend on timely information and analyses to monitor patterns of employment, fiscal health, and public demand for their goods and services. The greater public, on the other hand, needs to know whether and how the arts should factor into decisions about where to live, how to spend one's discretionary time, and what kind of education to provide for one's children.

The NEA remains the primary Federal source for national data and analyses about the U.S. arts sector. Increasingly, however, the Agency has aimed not only to explore the factors and conditions affecting arts participation and art-making, but also to illuminate the impact of the arts on American lives and communities. This new line of scientific inquiry will require creative research methods, more robust data collection involving Federal, academic, and commercial partners, regular convenings with the Nation's cultural research experts, and smarter metrics. Above all, it will require leadership.

As Federal, State, and local policymakers assess the place of arts and culture in their programs and budgets, they seek authoritative details about the arts' contributions to social, civic, and economic outcomes. The NEA will conduct impact analyses of arts and cultural programming; such studies will incorporate both quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

Further, the Agency will share relevant findings and data with the public through publications, presentations, convenings, and news and social media. These efforts will bring cohesion to ongoing cultural research endeavors spanning many different disciplines across the United States. In tracking this work, the NEA will pay close attention to cutting-edge research strategies and will offer encouragement to a new generation of arts and cultural researchers.

More sophisticated and credible information about the value and impact of the arts will enable the NEA, in turn, to pursue its overall mission more effectively. Some of that knowledge will bear directly on the Agency's work in supporting arts creation, arts participation, arts education, and arts integration with community life. Other research findings will influence national and community-level indicators of creative and cultural vitality, allowing policy-makers to become better informed about the distinct contributions the arts make to society.

The first step toward consolidating such evidence will be to prepare and implement a short- to mid-term (3-5 years) research agenda, based on internal, public, and expert consultation. The agenda will establish outcomes and targets to align with five goals:

- **Cultivate** More and Better Quality Data Sources at the National Level
- **Investigate** Characteristics and Contributions of the U.S. Arts Sector
- **Evaluate** NEA Programs for their Impact and Effectiveness (see p. 37)
- **Articulate** Research Results and Policy Implications to the Public
- **Elevate** the Profile of Arts-Related Research as a Field of Study

Strategies

Through the NEA Office of Research & Analysis:

1) Create a NEA Research Agenda and vet with internal and external stakeholders. The Agenda will include short- to mid-term (3-5 years) milestones that contribute to longer-term goals in priority research areas.

2) Identify optimal distribution channels for NEA Research projects and use them effectively. The distribution channels will be specified in the NEA Research Agenda.

3) Examine arts research initiatives outside the NEA and, where appropriate, determine mechanisms for the Agency to foster collaboration among these initiatives.

4) Use research and evaluation findings to identify best practices in priority areas. Encourage adoption of those practices by the Agency and relevant stakeholders.

5) Work efficiently and effectively with the State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations to explore strategies that can help the Agency fulfill this outcome.

Performance Measures

The NEA has developed the following performance measure to track success in achieving this outcome.[19]

Measure	***Scope***	***Source***	***Frequency***
3.1.1: Percent of NEA Research Agenda and Distribution Milestones Met to Address Priority Research Gaps	Identifies the research and distribution milestones achieved by NEA, compared to the target timeframes established in a NEA Research Agenda.	An internal assessment of NEA research efforts and progress toward milestones.	Annually.

[19] Throughout this Strategic Plan, the Agency is relying on a limited number of strategic measures, only those most instrumental to gauging performance in each outcome area. Consequently, not all of the NEA's activities in support of this outcome are reflected in the metrics shown.

Goal 3: To Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Contributions of the Arts

Outcome 3.2: Partnerships Increase the Domestic and International Impact of the Arts

As the Federal Government's lead agency in supporting the arts, and as its primary sponsor of arts-related research, the Arts Endowment is a vital resource for domestic and international organizations that have common cause with the NEA. At the Federal level, the Arts Endowment can communicate knowledge about the value and impact of the arts to other agencies and departments to complement their efforts to serve the American people.

In recent years, the NEA has formed strategic partnerships with the Departments of Education, Agriculture, Defense, Interior, and State, in addition to working with the Institute of Museum & Library Services, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, the National Park Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency, among others. Internationally, the NEA can raise awareness among other countries and cultures about the exemplary offerings of American artists. Alternatively, the Agency can expose American audiences to new and exciting works being created abroad.

Whether working through the U.S. Department of State with government arts agencies in China, Japan, Pakistan, or Egypt—or bringing American art to audiences in Russia or Mexico—the Arts Endowment historically has played a formal and informal role in cultural diplomacy through the arts. Over the next five years, the NEA will renew efforts to strengthen cultural ties and promote the exchange of artistic resources between the United States and its international partners.

Strategies

1) Identify target Federal agencies that perceive great value in enhancing the role of arts in their program planning. Cultivate relationships with those organizations to explore formal and/or informal partnerships.

2) Identify international partners that have the means, opportunity, and inclination to pursue a strategic goal shared by the NEA. Cultivate relationships with those organizations.

3) Work efficiently and effectively with the State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations to explore strategies that can help the Agency fulfill this outcome.

Performance Measures

The NEA has developed the following performance measures to track success in achieving this outcome.[20]

Measure	*Scope*	*Source*	*Frequency*
3.2.1: Number of Federal Agency Partners and Partnerships that Include the Arts in Their Program Planning	Identifies the number of Federal agency partners and partnerships that include the arts in their program planning.	An internal assessment of NEA Federal partnerships.	Annually.
3.2.2: Number of Partnerships that Promote American Art and Artists Internationally or Bring Art and Artists from Other Countries to U.S. Audiences	Identifies the number of partnerships NEA forms with organizations to promote American art and artists internationally or bring art and artists from other countries to U.S. audiences.	An internal assessment of NEA international partnerships.	Annually.

[20] Throughout this Strategic Plan, the Agency is relying on a limited number of strategic measures, only those most instrumental to gauging performance in each outcome area. Consequently, not all of the NEA's activities in support of this outcome are reflected in the metrics shown.

Goal 4: To Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence

Outcome 4.1: NEA Attracts, Maintains, and Optimizes a Productive, Creative, and Motivated Workforce

To accomplish Goals 1 through 3, the Arts Endowment requires a workforce that demonstrates the qualities of excellence, creativity, and innovation that are identified with the Agency's mission. The NEA is committed to recruiting a diverse and competent workforce, ensuring that employees have the resources and technologies they need to excel in their jobs, and fostering a climate of personal and professional accountability.

The NEA has taken steps to foster an environment that supports a highly productive, creative, and motivated workforce. In addition to government-wide benefits including incentive awards program, family-friendly leave policies, and flexible/alternative work schedules, the NEA also provides wellness services, such as its interagency agreement with Federal Occupational Health (FOH) to provide health center services to Agency staff.

To maintain the highest standard of organizational excellence, the Agency regularly will monitor employee feedback. A key strategy for collecting employee feedback is the OPM Federal Human Capital Survey, which identifies specific areas as needing improvement. With this Strategic Plan, employee feedback becomes part of the NEA's performance measurement. This information will be used to improve recruitment and retention strategies for outstanding workers.

Strategies

1) Recruit a diverse, highly-skilled, and competent workforce.

2) Support the workforce with efficient and effective human resource policies, opportunities for training, and access to information technologies.

3) Encourage and reward creative and innovative problem-solving.

4) Incentivize outstanding employees.

5) Foster a climate of personal and professional accountability.

Performance Measures

The NEA has developed the following performance measures to track success in achieving this outcome.[21]

Measure	*Scope*	*Source*	*Frequency*
4.1.1: Percent of Employees Reporting Positive Responses to Key Questions on the Annual OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey	Focuses on topics in the annual survey over which NEA management has some reasonable degree of control or influence.	Results from the annual OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey reported to the NEA by OPM.	Annually.
4.1.2: Percent of Employees Hired Within 80 Days of Approval to Recruit	Evaluates the NEA's ability to satisfy OPM's 80-day standard for Federal employee hiring.	An internal assessment of hiring cycle time.	Annually.
4.1.3: Percent of Time IT Systems are Available to NEA Employees	Gauges NEA's ability to minimize IT systems' disruptions for staff.	An internal assessment of system uptime.	Annually.

[21] Throughout this Strategic Plan, the Agency is relying on a limited number of strategic measures, only those most instrumental to gauging performance in each outcome area. Consequently, not all of the NEA's activities in support of this outcome are reflected in the metrics shown.

Goal 4: To Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence

Outcome 4.2: NEA is an Efficient and Vigilant Steward of Public Funds

In addition to holding its workers accountable—and being accountable to its workers—the NEA has a duty to the American taxpayer. Its responsibilities extend to the financial integrity of its operations, but also to its communication with members of the public who seek to use the Agency's services.

The Arts Endowment continually seeks ways to improve the efficiency of its operations. Technology has been an effective tool to improve efficiency. A collaboration with the Center for Arts Management and Technology (CAMT) at Carnegie Mellon University, for instance, has enabled the NEA to improve its application review process through the use of technology, allowing application reviewers to score online, and enabling Agency staff to work more easily with electronic applications, making application processing more efficient and improving grants management. A recent interagency agreement with the National Finance Center, the NEA's payroll service provider, will enable the NEA to transition to a Web-based time and attendance system in FY 2011.

NEA operations improve as a result of using clear and understandable reporting, proper internal controls, meaningful performance measures, continuous assessment to achieve desired outcomes, and effective management. The NEA management will regularly review progress toward achieving outcomes, and continuously improve by planning, executing, evaluating, and adjusting actions to achieve desired results. Performance data, supplemented by information provided by grantees through applications and final reports, will be reviewed quarterly and reported semi-annually as part of this effort.

Strategies

1) Maintain financial integrity throughout the Agency.

2) Promote data-driven decision-making and information-sharing practices throughout the Agency.

3) Improve grants management and grantee compliance. Provide technical assistance to applicants and grantees through outreach efforts.

4) Expand the use of technology to improve productivity and efficiency.

5) Foster a climate of organizational accountability.

Performance Measures

The NEA has developed the following performance measures to track success in achieving this outcome.[22]

Measure	***Scope***	***Source***	***Frequency***
4.2.1: NEA's Financial **Statements Audit Opinion**	Assesses the NEA's ability to present fairly the NEA's financial statements, and provides insights into the Agency's effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting.	Independent Auditor's assessment.	Annually.
4.2.2: Applicant Satisfaction with Application Guidance	Assesses applicants' satisfaction with the guidance provided to them during the application process.	Results of applicant surveys administered anonymously to NEA applicants following the submission of an application.	Annually.

[22] Throughout this Strategic Plan, the Agency is relying on a limited number of measures, only those most instrumental to gauging performance in each outcome area. Consequently, not all of the NEA's activities in support of this outcome are reflected in the metric shown.

Section Four: Program Evaluation Plans

With the FY 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, the NEA is undertaking three comprehensive efforts to validate the assumptions that drive its program planning:

- *Independent, Post-Award Reviews*. The Agency will institute post-award, independent, citizen-expert reviews of selected NEA grants to determine the degree to which objectives were achieved. Grants awarded for the creation of artworks will be evaluated to determine the degree to which NEA-supported projects demonstrate excellence.

  For NEA consortium grants—those involving multiple partners as a single applicant—the post-award review will determine the degree to which innovative methods were employed in the making of art and the delivery of art to audiences. [23]

- *Audience Surveys*. For a random subset of grants that involve the presentation of art performances or exhibits, the NEA will require grantees to conduct surveys of their audience members to gauge the nature and extent of audience response to these art experiences. In addition, the surveys will ask about audience members' prior exposure to similar events and activities.

  The survey results will give the Agency a snapshot of attitudinal and/or motivational changes that occurred as a result of NEA grants supporting the engagement of Americans with diverse and excellent art. As a service to grantees, the NEA will use the survey data not only to inform its own performance assessment; it also will provide grantees with analyses of results from their individual surveys.

- *Grant Applicant Surveys*. NEA grant applicants will be surveyed anonymously upon submission of their applications so that the Agency can learn about the sufficiency of guidance provided to them during the application process. Where appropriate, this information will be used to refine the grant application process.

[23] It is important to note that the post-award reviews will not in any way penalize NEA grantees. The Agency's pre-award review processes already will have established the artistic excellence of the projects at the grant application stage—and, in the case of consortium grants, their capacity for innovation. The post-award panel reviews are intended solely to improve the NEA's understanding of whether projects that receive Agency funding on the basis of artistic excellence and/or innovation demonstrated those qualities at the time of award close-out.

In addition to these periodic assessments, the Agency is contemplating two program evaluations in 2011-2013:

- *Our Town*. Contingent on funding to support an *Our Town* initiative, as proposed in the President's FY 2011 budget request, the NEA likely will conduct an evaluation of grants supported by the program. The evaluation will include quantitative and qualitative research approaches to measure the impact of NEA funding on *Our Town* communities; it also will collect baseline social and economic data so that the Agency can follow up with special studies over the medium (3-5 years) to long (8-10 years) term, as warranted.

- *Arts Education*. A second program evaluation would focus on reviewing the NEA's grants portfolio and partnerships in support of K-12, standards-based arts education. The review would identify future priorities for the Agency's work in this area; it also would yield a conceptual framework for understanding and leveraging the Agency's relationships with its various strategic partners in support of arts education.

All such efforts will benefit from the recent establishment of a program evaluation function within the NEA's Office of Research & Analysis. The office will analyze data collected for informational and strategic purposes and present the findings to NEA staff and leadership on a periodic basis, helping to improve the Agency's overall decision-making.

Formal and informal sharing of performance data will contribute to organizational excellence, which, as the previous section states, is critical to the NEA's ability to advance artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities.